

Three Private

MEDITATIONS

Which being, for the most
Part, of Publick Concernment, are
therefore Published, by their Author

GEO. WITHER.

The *First*, is a *Private Thanksgiving*, consisting of *three Hymns*, whereby, GOD is magnified for his *Mercy* vouchsafed in the late *Engagement* between the *English* and the *Dutch*, in *June 1665*. Composed after Celebrating the *Publick Thanksgiving* commanded by the *King*.

The *Second*, is a Sacrifice of *Praise* and *Prayer*, by him offered to Almighty GOD, for his providential respect, to *Him*; his *Wife* and *Children*, during his Imprisonment in the disgraceful Goal of *Newgate*, when left destitute of all ordinary means of subsistence, by being deprived both of his *Estate* and *Liberty*.

The *Third*, Intituled *NIL ULTRA*, is a *Soliloquium*, wherein, this *Author*, expresses the improbability, of an effectual proceeding further, to prevent the *Sin*, & *Plagues* increasing, by ought, which he can offer to consideration.

Imprinted in the Year, 1665.

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A Private

THANK-OBLATION

Consisting of *Three Hymns*,

whereby Almighty GOD is magnified for his *Mercy* vouchsafed in the late *Ingagement* between the *English* and the *Dutch*, in *June* 1665. after Celebration of the *Publick Thanksgiving* commanded by the *King*.

The first Hymn, is a Preparation of the heart, to the duty intended.

NOW, what to GOD's praise belongs,
I will sing in *holy Songs*;
Who, shall from his *heav'nly Quire*,
With such *straines* my heart inspire,
That, (though distant) I, and they
Therein, joyn together may:
For, his influenced *Grace*
Is not bard, by *Time* or *Place*.

2.

Let his Raies of *Light Divine*,
In me, and upon me shine;
Let his *holy spirit* shake
Drowsie flesh, till it shall wake;

A 2

Touch

Touch my *Lips*, unlose my *Tongue*,
That his *Praises* may be sung;
For, till rouz'd up, from on high,
Dark, and *dull*, and *dumb* am I.

3.

Humane words, cannot impart
What GOD speaketh to my heart,
Nor my faulting *tongue* declare
All his *Operations* there,
Yet, I am compell'd sometimes,
In plain *Verse*, and broken *Kimes*,
Thus, to stammer out such things,
As to me the *spirit* brings.

4.

To extol what GOD hath done,
Here, I mus'ng am alone;
And, do praise him in my heart
For what none can claim a part;
But, what to his *praise* belongs
He now sing in *Vocal songs*
And, will so his praise declare
That, no man shall therein share.

*The Second Hymn being an imperfect Narrative and
confession to Gods glory, of what he hath done for us,
in the late Engagement; how little, we have merited
the mercies vouchsafed; and how merciful GOD hath
been to both Nations.*

LORD, in a publick meeting, I, this day
Have joyn'd, a *Sacrifice of Thanks* to pay;
And, being warmed at the common fire,
(By what external notions could inspire)

To

To perfect that which is begun,
 (And ought in duty to be done)
 I, now withdraw into my heart,
 To speak to thee, who therein art;
 And learn, how, I may to thy praise,
 So sanctifie my words and wayes,
 That, henceforth, they may more conduce unto
 Thy glory, then they heretofore could do.
 Oh ! let my *Meditations* be
 Made acceptable unto thee.

2.

For *Victory* confer'd, we prais'd thy *Name*;
 We hear, our *foes* have likewise done the same.
 And doubtless, whosoever *lost* or *won*,
 To thee, are praises due for what is done,
 Yea, no less praise for what is *lost*,
 Then that, for which we triumph most ;
 The one our *pride* may elevate,
 The other, *humble us*, for that
 Which was mis-acted, or mis-spoke :
 For, Thou, who heed of both hast took,
 So graciously, oh Lord, hast shar'd betwixt
 Both *Nations*, *sweet* with *bitter*, intermixt,
 That, no man, this day duly keeps,
 Save he, who therein *sings* and *weeps*.

3.

For, all *Transactions*, which concern in gross
 Our *publick*, or our *private* gain, or *loss* (bring)
 (And, which unto our knowledge, *fame* doth
 Well-weightd) gives cause, no less to *weep*, then *sing*.
 The *good successes* we have had
 Abate some fears to make us glad ;
 The *hopes*, which those *events* do give
 (Of what we willingly believe)

So high our *expectations* rear
 As if, he we were above all fear.
 But, when we hear the many *Lamentations*
 For loss of *Limbs, Lives, and belov'd Relations*,
 To *sadness*, all our *joy* it turns,
 And, he, who much rejoiced mourns.

4.

A *final Conquest* is not yet obtain'd ;
 That, rarely with one *Victory* is gain'd :
 For, they who loose at first, at last, may win,
 By mending *faults*, with which, they did begin.
 And, they who did at first prevail,
 Find, oftentimes, their hopes to fail
 Because to *trustless* things they trust,
 Or else, employ to feed their Lust,
 That, which thy *Majesty* intends
 Should strengthen them to better ends.
 When, therefore most *Victorious* we appear,
 Let us *rejoyce*, but, with a *trembling fear* ,
 Lest, when the *rolling wheel* shall turn,
 We, who rejoyce, find cause to mourn.

5.

Thou art but little pleas'd (if ought at all)
 To see us triumph, when our foes do fall ;
 Especially, when they (though ours they be)
 Are thy *known enemies*, no more then we.
 To be our GOD, we thee profess ;
 They (to our knowledge) do no less.
 We say, our trust is in thy *Name* ,
 They may as truly, say the same.
 Their sins are many ; we are sure
 (Or may be) that, ours are not fewer.
 We have not yet, our *hopes* at full enjoy'd ;
 Nor are their *expectations* quite destroy'd ;

To

To praise thee therefore, we and they,
Are equally oblig'd this day.

6.

We say, the *Dutch* to us ingrateful be,
Our Conscience tells us, we are so to thee.
They with our *Nation* cruelly have dealt;
Our inhumanity, thy *Saints* have felt.
Their *Avarice*, makes them oppress;
Ill husbandry and idleness,
Have made our wayes, as grievous prove,
To those, who seek for peace in love.
And, we, and they pursue the *course*
Most likely, to make bad things worse.
Then, Lord, which of us, justly can expect
That, our *Contests*, should have a good effect?
Or, that the one should have a place
Above the other in thy Grace?

7.

Had it so pleas'd thee, thou at first *Shock*,
Both *Earthen Pitchers*, mightst have justly broke;
But they, (as if they had been made of leather)
Are onely bruiz'd by being knockt together:
Which, in meer love, to us and them,
Thou didst vouchsafe, to give us time,
With more advisement to take heed,
What, by *Contention* will succeed;
Lest both before their *quarrëls* end,
Be broke like *pots*, which none can mend.
Lord, were there but that *mercy*, and no more,
In that, which we pretend to praise thee for,
It merits from *this*, and *that Nation*,
An everlasting *Thank-oblation*.

For,

8.

For, in this *mercy*, unto both extended,
 Are very many *mercies* comprehended,
 So complicated, one within another,
 And, to thy *Judgments*, linked so together,
 That, if we could be brought to learn
 How, they both *Nations* do concern;
 To what, each *Judgment* doth direct,
 What every *mercy* might effect;
 What, we should seek, what we should shun;
 And, what, ought timely to be done;
 The wisest men among us, could not tell
 Whether, those things which us have pleased well;
 Or, that, which grieves us most, shall best
 Thy *loving kindness* manifest.

9.

The *Trophies*, which most men delight to raise;
 As testimonies of a *thankful praise*,
 For what thou daign'st, are but a *medly mirth*,
 Of wholsome *simples*, mixt with coursest earth,
 Or, with such noisome *weeds*, as grow
 Upon dunghils here below;
 That, to thy nostrils and thine eyes,
 Offensive *fummings* vaporize,
 Which do provoke thine anger more,
 Than many errors heretofore:
 And, that, which for *thine honor*, some pretend,
 Is for their *own praise*, or, a baser end;
 Either, to satisfy their *Lust*,
 Or, praise *false gods* in which they trust.

10.

My GOD, look not severely upon this;
 Or, on ought else, that hath been done amiss;

For,

A Private Thank-Oblation;

3

For, no *oblation* can from us proceed;
Which will deserve a favourable heed:
Some of our *offerings*, now and then,
May beneficial be to *men*;
Or, to thy *Saints* on earth extend,
If we confer them to that end
For which, they seem to be bestown
(And, in their welfare, seek our own :)
But, to advantage thee, the precious thing,
Which, we to please, or to appease, can bring;
Adds nothing ; though thou pleased art,
With what comes from a faithful heart.

11.

Be mindful still, that we are *flesh and blood*;
Whence, nothing can expected be that's good ;
Till by his Cross it shall be mortify'd,
Who, to redeem it from corruption dy'd.
Remember whereof we are made ;
That ev'n the best of us are bad ;
Our seeming sanctified joyes,
Uncomely actions and rude noise,
Which make thy best beloved fory,
Instead of adding to thy glory.
Oh ! let hereof, a free unfain'd *confession*;
(A *burnt oblation* made by true *contrition*,
And, hallow'd by *Christ's* blood) purge hence ;
All, that, which gives to thee offence.

12.

The more thou shalt enlarge our *wealth and power*;
Our selves, let us lay down so much the lower ;
And, rather use them to unite together
In love, then in destroying one another.
He, in the best mode gives thee praise,
Who, ordereth aright his *ways* ;

B

Whos

Who, justifies thee in thy *will*,
By thereunto, conforming still;
And brings to thee a *contrite heart*,
Ascribing thereto no desert:
This is, most gracious GOD, a *sacrifice*,
Which thou didst never (never wilt) despise;
And, such a *sacrifice*, I pray
Make that, which I present this day.

13.

Unfained thanks my heart returns to thee,
For that, which thou hast done, *what e're it be*,
Against, or *for us*: hearty thanks we owe
Both for what thou withholdst, and dost bestow.

Prosperity is no true sign
Who is a *Favourite* of thine;
Nor any one dost thou reject,
Whom frequently thou dost correct,
Unless he be more *wilful* far
Then *frail*, as very many are;
And whether thou dost give us *wound*, or *heal*,
It will at last, conduce unto our weal,
If we, (but as we may) persevere
In contributing our endeavor.

14.

Two of thy greatest *Plagues*, on us, now lie;
The *third* is threatned, and seems very nigh:
Thy other *Judgments* also scatred are
So thick, though these three Kindoms evry where,
That, by them, very few or none,
Have scaped being seiz'd upon;
Or, being pincht, in what relates
Unto their *Persons*, or *Estates*:
Yet, *sin* doth most men so besot,
As if thy frowns they feared not;

And,

And, are more zealous others to destroy,
Then, of the meanes their own peace to enjoy;
A madness, which worse plagues procures,
Then pestilential *Calamities*,

15.

Arise oh GOD, advance thy *Throne* on high;
Thy self, let thine *own* *actings* glorifie.
Thy *Justice* and thy *Mercy* so unite
That, they may honor thee in all mens sight.

Rebuke those who delight in war,
And, to thy *Saints* injurious are:
Give *peace* to those, who *peace* affect,
And, them from all their foes protect,
That, *Righteousness* and *Peace* may hither
Return, and here, still reign together.

Thy foes, are now become exceeding strong,
Thy *coming*, therefore, Lord, defer not long.

But, *I have done*: for, thou, with pow'r e
Art coming, and wilt keep thine hour,

16.

Dear GOD, this petty *sacrifice* of mine,
Was took out of a *Treasury* of thine,
And, of mine own, I, naught can thereto add,
Except my *heart*, which, from thee, too, I had,

Kept to thy self, now, let that be,

And, never left again to me,

Or wander thither, where it may

Unto the world be made a prey;

Or, by the temptings of the Devil,

Be drawn unto the love of evil;

Then, *this*, (and *that*, which I have heretofore,
To praise thee offer'd) thee, shal praise much more,

Then many things, *done*, *heard*, and *told*,

In *Temples*, deckt with silk, and gold.

B 2

The

The third Hymn, proceeds to a thankful Illustration of
 GOD's deserved Praise, by acknowledging his Al-
 mightiness; his observing what hath been openly
 and secretly done in ev'ry part of the world, by both
 the said Nations, and that no praise is justly
 due to either of us, but shame rather, for ought per-
 formed in the said Engagement.

MOST Almighty LORD of Hosts,
 High Protector of our Coasts,
 Who, commandst, as thou dost please,
 Fire and Water, Earth and Seas;
 Who, lookst down from heav'n, upon
 All that here on earth is done,
 And, survey'st her darkeſt parts,
 Ev'n the Crannies of mens hearts.

2.

Thou beheldst the Preparations
 Of these wilful Neighbouring Nations;
 Thou, haſt heard what they have ſpoken,
 Heedeſt what ſuch words betoken:
 Thou haſt ſearch'd out their Deſigns,
 With what thereto them inclines,
 And, knowſt whether of the two,
 Is the worſt, if one be ſo.

3.

Thou, obſerveſt what was done;
 Not in Africa alone
 Or, both Indies; but, what was
 Done, likewise, in ev'ry place:
 Why the Engliſh and the Dutch
 Are divided now ſo much:

What

What is false, with what is true;
And, to which most blame is due.

4.

Thou remembreſt, what Relations
Have been long between theſe Nations,
What *professions* to each other,
They did make when knit together;
Yea, what they profeſt to thee,
Which now ſeems forgot to be,
As if they were not ſuch men,
Or ſuch *Chriſtians*, now, as then.

5.

To prevent what is begun,
Much, by thee, was timely done;
But, their *Avarice* and *Pride*,
Them, did more and more divide.
To *ſelf-will* they did adhere
Like men without *wit*, or *fear*;
So, thou leftſt them both, to do
What they were inclin'd unto,

6.

Then, with *Streamers* and with *Flags*,
Fooliſh vaunts, and *ſhameleſs braggs*,
They weigh'd Anchors from the ſhore,
Which, by ſome, was ſeen no more;
And, with an unchriſtian rage
Gainſt each other did ingage;
Fire and *Water*, in that hour,
Striving which ſhould moſt devour.

7.

Dread of Death, that man amazes;
Noise, and ſmoke, and ſudden blazes
This man blinds, and deafneth ſo
That, he knows not Friend from Foe,

B 3

Some,

Some, are slain by their own *Tools*,
Wise-men speed as ill as *Fools*;

Here, a *Valiant Souldier* dies,

There, a *Coward* sprawling lies.

8.

Loud the thundring Guns did roar,
Sails, and *Masts*, and *Keels* were tore;

Ships, were either split, or fir'd;

Men, by thousands, there expir'd,

This man sinks, and that man swims,

Some escap'd, with loss of limbs,

But, to whether best befell,

Thou alone, oh Lord, canst tell.

9.

Horrid *sights*, and *sounds without*,

Them assaulted round about,

Which, in some, did thoughts begin

That, rais'd greater *Frights within*;

And, though wounds did grieve them sore

That, tormented them much more;

For, their pains, none can declare,

Who, in *spirit* wounded are.

10.

This, we know, that thou art just,

As is ev'ry thing thou dost:

Thou, art *kind*, and lov'st so well,

That by *woundings*, thou dost *heal*.

Thou art *wise*, and actest so,

That, we thereby, we *wise* might grow;

And, by what was lately done,

Might *new mercies* be begun.

11.

Not to us, LORD, for the same,

Be the praise, but, to thy *Name*:

Unto

Unto us, for what was done,
Nought belongs, but *shame* alone.
We, were so much terrify'd,
That, we knew not what we did,
Nor yet seem to understand,
What *work*, thou hast now in hand.

12.

This *Correction* was in *Love*,
Which, if both should so improve
As (if they had grace) they may
By true *penitence*, this day
Our, endeavour to be *Friends*,
To thine honor, so much tends,
That, it would for both these *Nations*,
Prove the best, of their *Oblations*.

13.

Victories, do not belong
To an *Arm of Flesh*, though strong;
'Tis nor *Policy* nor *Force*,
Ships, nor Troops of Men and Horse;
No, nor *formal thanks and prayers*,
That prevents *Death* or *Despairs*,
But, it is thy *powerful Arm*,
That secures from *fear* and *harm*.

14.

Therefore, *praise*, for all *well done*,
I ascribe to thee alone:
All, that men have brought to pass,
Merits nothing but *Disgrace*,
And the best that we can do,
Will but *Ruine* add thereto,
If we keep our *crooked ways*,
Or, shall grudge at thy due *praise*.

A

A R E S O L V E,

Occasioned by somewhat spoken concerning
this *Thank-Oblation*, and this Authors o-
ther Writings.

IT may be, many will these Hymns contemn,
Because, they do not relish well to them.
They likewise, may Inferiour Gods offend,
Because in this Oblation, I intend
No praise to them, but that, praise should be given
To magnifie alone, my GOD in heaven.
The first of these, I leave to their own mode,
In offering up Oblations unto GOD:
For, if well-pleasing unto him they be,
They cannot be distasteful unto me;
And, whatsoever they of me shall say,
I may be thereby profited some way.
As for the latter, there is little need
That, I, to their deserving should take heed:
For, Prophets, Priests, and Poets of their own
Enough they have, to make their merits known.
These, to extoll their Patrons, can, and may
Write more, and speak much more, then I dare say,
Who, (whatsoever advantage thence may flow,)
Can praise no man, for what I do not know.
These, do as their Inspirers, them incline,
And, I do, as I am inspir'd by mine.

Moreover, it becomes not him, who sings
A Song of praise unto the King of Kings,
The Attributes of men to intermingle
With his (as to those works he worketh single)

That,

*That, were to follow their absurd example
Who worship GOD and Baal within one Temple,
Or Chronicle the Deeds by HERO's done,
With Tales of Robin Hood, and Little John:
For these respects, I know men Sober-witted
Will me excuse for what may seem omitted;
And, as for those men, who so prudent are not,
Whether, they me excuse, or no, I care not.*

To my Dearly Beloved Children.

ABout twenty years now past, though I had then *temporal possessions*, which I might probably have given and bequeathed, I composed and intended for your *Legacy, A Soliloquie and Prayer*, which I had spread in Writing before GOD on your behalves; and I believe it shall continue for ever in his view: But, there being but one Coppy thereof, both you and I were deprived of that *Composure*, when the Book for which I here suffer was taken out of my Closet. Therefore, being now likely to be so separated from you, how much soever it may concern our temporal or spiritual well-beings, that I may thenceforth perhaps never see you more. I send you this Sacrifice of Praise and Prayer, next following, to be instead of that which is lost; for it contains in effect somewhat, (as to the Petitionary part) of that which was spread before GOD (as aforesaid) in a larger Scrol. Take it into your serious considerations, and lay it up among your Evidences; For it will speak to your advantage, when I can speak no more for you; when other men who can speak for you, will not; when many perhaps will speak

C

against

against you, and when you shall not be able to speak for your selves.

GOD, sanctifie unto you this brief *Memorandum*, and you to his glory, that we may all meet together in him to our everlasting joy. Be obedient to your Mother, the enjoyment of whose Company, will more then recompence the loss of mine; For GOD hath endowed her with so much maternal prudence and love, that by her counsel, (if you despise it not) your *Posterity* may be continued on the Earth untill *Christ* comes to gather together his *Elect*. Remember the counsel of your *earthly Father*, that the promise made by your *heavenly Father* to the *Rechabites* may be enlarged to you and your Posterities; For, your and their personal obedience to GODs Covenant made with all *Mankind* in *Christ Iesu*, will be required (according to that assisting Grace which he vouchsafeth) toward the accomplishing of what I have prayed for concerning you. The blessing of GOD be with you, and Farewell.

Your Affectionate Father,

Newgate Feb. 15.

1662.

GEO: WITHER.

1609

A

Sacrifice of Praise and Prayer

Offered unto Almighty GOD, by *George Wither* for his gracious *Providence*, in providing for *Him*, his *Wife* and *Children*, during his Imprisonment in the disgraceful Gaol of NEWGATE, and when left destitute of all ordinary means of subsistence, by being deprived both of his *Estate* and *Liberty*.

LORD, though my *Prayers* and my *Praises*, be
 Unworthy to be offred up to thee,
 Thus (as I am obliged) I assay
 To adde unto thine *honor* what I may,
 By publishing both with my Tongue and Pen,
 Thy *Loving kindness* to the Sons of men;
 Especially, in those particulars
 Whereby thy kindness unto me appears.
 Prais'd be thy blessed *Name*; For, thou art speedy
 In shewing thy compassion to the needy;
 And leav'it not any *sufferer* in despair
 Who, timely seeks thy help by faithful prayer,
 In patient waiting during his probation,
 For thy appointed hour of Salvation.
 Of this, thy never failing *Clemency*,
 Few men have had more evidence then I.
 Or in all straights, vouchsaf'd more seasonably
 A needfull, and a competent supply

C 2

Yea,

Yea though my *sufferings* have been great & many
 And, I, in flesh as sensible as any
 Of ev'ry *grievance*, thou hast by their length
 Improved so my patience and my strength,
 That, oft such *grievances*, were not alone
 As tollerable as if they were none:
 But, such as also, have my joy increast
 When I to other men seem'd moit oppress'd.
 For, though I have compleated now, well-near,
 In weal and woe, the three and fiftieth year,
 And six *Confinements*, since I first begun
 That *work*, which I thought needful to be done;
 Thou hast preserv'd me so, and me so armed,
 Against all *changes*, that, none me hath harmed;
 Which, unto me, a *knowledge* doth derive
 Of what thou art, that's more then speculative;
 That, what experimentally I speak,
 In other men, may more impression make,
 Then when I *Notions* only shall declare,
 That were infus'd into me, through the ear,
 And 'tis not thy least *Mercy*, that of late,
 Thou dost their seeming *Charity* abate,
 Who, thought, they might thereby have tempted
 To wrong my conscience, and be false to thee, me
 By smothering, or Adulterating that
 Which, to *Truths* vindication may relate:
 For, when with needful food men bait their hook,
 The heedless hungry Fishes are soon took;
 And, whether, we confide in thee or no,
 Whilst we have Oil and Meal, tis hard to know.

Nor, I, nor mine, (though rob'd of all) ought
 That's needful for the belly, or the back. (lack,
 Thou hast my Wife and Children cloth'd and fed,
 When I could give them neither Cloth nor Bread;
 And,

And, from the earth, when (in seed branch & root)
 I seem'd likely to be rooted out,
 My *Withred sprouts*, were then by the re-planted,
 Where they enjoy the nourishment they wanted :
 So timely, and in such a manner too,
 Was that vouchsaf'd, which thou were pleas'd to do,
 That, for it, my *well-wishers* prais'd thy *Name*;
 And next thereat, my envious foes become.
 Especially, in that place, where their worst
 And last despights, were manifested first ;
 For, there, and in their sight, by whom undone
 I seem'd to be, that mercy was begun.

The *Families*, from whom I was design'd
 To take my *Being*, thou hast now twice joyn'd,
 And, their two *Surname*, being joyn'd together,
 Denominate my *Grandson*, HUNT L' WITHER,
 Who, is in possibility to have
 Earth of his own, wherein to make his Grave ;
 And find a *livelyhood* whilst here he lives,
 If he, thy Bounty thankfully receives ;
 (And, no whir farther shall be trusted in,
 Then that should be, which hath supply'd been
 Instead of what I lost) For, Lord, in thee,
 (And, not in what thou giv'st) our trust should be.

My only *Daughter*, when left *portionless*,
 And without any likely hopefulness
 Of more then thou didst on her Birthday give her;
 Yea, when I was disabled to relieve her
 Thou didst, ev'n in that great necessity,
 Espouse into a *Loving Family*,
 Enobled, by a *Pedigree*, or *Stem*
 Which hath no blemish to disparage them;
 Or, such wants, as may make the reputation
 Of *Births*, and *Titles* loose their estimation.

Oh ! let thy so uniting them together,
 Make them a mutual blessing to each other ;
 And, by considring with due thankfulness,
 What thou hast done for me in my distress,
 Make both my Children, and their whole descent
 With thy good pleasure, at all times content;
 That, they to others, good example giving,
 By their *woell-doing*, joyn'd with *right believing*,
 (And likewise heeding how thou dost proceed
 With such as in thy *Fatherhood* confide)
 They never may despair, though quite bereft
 Of what their *earthly Fathers* might have left :
 And, from my personal experiments,
 Let them, thereof to minde them, take some hints.

For, when I by the world, seem'd quite forsaken
 And, she, with *Lands* and *Goods*, from me had taken
 My *Liberty* ; that, what then grieved me
 Might more immitter'd, and redoubled be
 By what my Children suffred ; when, they had
 No means of comfort, and, thereby grew sad :
 Thou, didst for that a Remedy provide,
 By making them, a *Bridegome*, and a *Bride*
 (whilst I imprison'd was within that place
 Which added to my *Poverty* disgrace)
 To my good liking, and their own content,
 Without self-seeking, or dispargement.
 This providential mercy, did appear
 The more, in that, they likewise married were,
 (As I awhile before, presag'd they should)
 Without such *portions*, as I lately could
 Have given them, when thou didst me disable
 Not without cause. And, tis considerable
 That, they kept both their Weddings in the sight
 Of those, who them pursude with most despight ;
 Ev'n

Ev'n in my *plundered house*, and at that time,
 In which my *wife*, had not to welcome them
 A *dish* or *stern*, but what a neighbour lent;
 Or Meat, but what by thee was thither sent,
 Yea, thou hast, when the world deni'd us bread
 Me, and my *Consort*, competently fed.
 (E're since, the world depriv'd us of our own)
 By them, whose faces are to us unknown;
 To evidence, that all thy *Saints* are friends,
 To him, who on thy *providence* depends,
 And to the utmost of his power perseveres
 In just and conscientious endeavors:
 Yea, though corruption so in him prevaieth,
 That of his duty many waies he faileth.
 He, hoping those *Experiments*, to some
 May comfortable in like *streights* become,
 Thus, for their sakes, in *words* exprest they be;
 For, without *words*, all things are known to thee.

All this consider'd, I oblig'd am
 To take unto my self deserved shame,
 When, therewith I well heed, how oft, by sin,
 To thy Commands, I have rebellious been;
 As also, that exceeding graciousness,
 Which thou to me vouchsafest ne'rtheless:
 And, it begets in me a greater fear,
 Then when thy *Chastisements* upon me are;
 For in correcting me, thou art more mild
 Then is a loving Father to his Child,
 When he not only *chideth*, but *intreats*,
 Kind language, mixing also, with his *threats*;
 Whips him, then kisseth; and sometimes to see
 Him weep doth shed as many tears as he.

LORD, for those *mercies*, graciously afforded,
 (Well meriting, by me to be recorded)

Accept

Accept this petty *Sacrifice of Praise*,
 And, make us truly thankful all our dayes,
 (Not only in our *verbal Thank-oblations*
 But also, in our *lives and conversations*)
 For, though we cannot golden gifts prefer
 Yet, we may offer *Frankincense and Myrrh*;
 And, from him, who hath not a *Lamb* to give,
 A *Dove*, thou with acceptance wilt receive,
 Vouchsafe us, in each temporary trial
 A constant progress with true *self-denial*;
 Let not the *Benefit* we have received
 Be underpriz'd, because we were bereaved
 Of those *externals*, which we have enjoyed,
 For, their enjoyment might have us destroyed;
 Yea, those whom thou mak'st *poor* thou lov'st as
 As those, whom thou art pleased to *enrich*; (much
 And, by thy *Grace*, we may advantage make,
 Of whatsoever thou dost *Give or Take*.

Keep *me* and *mine* from that Prevarication
 Which turns thy *proffer'd grace*, to *Reprobation*,
 Incline us to desire, and to embrace
 All means of perseverance in thy *Grace*,
 And, never let the *asking*, or the *granting*,
 Of any necessary gift be wanting.
 Make us to shun and hate, all things, whereby
 We may offend thy awful *Majesty*;
 Nor limiting thy *Mercy*, neither slandering
 Thy just *Decree*, as causes of our wandering:
 For, no man to be wicked is inforc'd,
 Or left by thee, untill he leaves thee first;
 Which, all men will confess when from their eyes
 That scurffe is rub'd, which yet upon them lies.

So knit us in one *true love knot* together
 By loving thee, and love to one another.

That

That, we in all *Temprations* fast may stand
 And *Sathan*, nor the world dissolve that band;
 For, where *Love*, in the heart keeps residence,
 Diff'rence in *Juagment*, gives no more offence
 Then diff'ring faces, although more delight
 We take in those, who *love* and *judge* aright.
 When we offend, Correct us as our *Father*
 With all thy *Temporary scourges*, rather
 Then suffer *sins*, by sins to be corrected,
 (Which is the greatest Plague can be inflicted)
 And that, we faint not underneath thy *Rod*,
 With *stripes*, mix mercy still, my gracious GOD.

I ask nor *Honors*, *Liberty*, nor *Wealth*,
 Nor *temporary pleasures* no nor *health*,
 Save, so far only, as thou knowst the use
 Of such things to thine honor may conduce
 With our *eternal safety*, and the Good
 Of those with whom we have a *Brotherhood*.
 And, hereto, I will add, but this *Request*
 (Which comprehends all that can be exprest)
 For *me* and *mine*. Oh let it LORD, be plac't,
 Where it may stand, as long as *Time* shall last,
 Within thy sight; and though, nor I, nor they
 For whom I sue, can merit what I pray,
 Vouchsafe it, for his sake, in whom I have
 So much confided, as his *Boone* to crave. (sprung,

Let us Dear GOD, from whom our Children
 And, all their *Off-spring*, whether *old* or *young*,
 Who, from our loins have being, or shall come
 Into this world, untill the *day of Doom*,
 By him be so preserved, at whose cost
 Redeem'd we were, that no *soul* may be lost,
 Or be deprived of thy promises
 In passing thorow this *lifes wilderness*,

D

Either

Either by *Adams* fault, or our own guilt;
 And then, of other things give what thou wilt :
 For, this I value more, then if I had
 Thy Grant, we should all *Kings* and *Queens* be
 Possessing in this life the largest measure (made,
 Of temporary *honour*, *wealth*, and pleasure.
 For they are Baubles, in respect of that
 My sanctify'd Ambition aimeth at.
 They who obtain'd most of them, were but slaves
 Who dropt with Infamy into their Graves ;
 And oft less misery, to them befalls
 Who get their bread, by robbing under stalls ;
 Or, in this world, advanced are no higher
 Then raking dirty rags out of the mire.
 Thus, I in brief, have summ'd up my *Request* ;
 Grant this, and let who pleaseth, take the rest.

LORD, I know none, who, ever heretofore
 Did in this mode, thy Majesty implore ;
 And, from what he believes of thee it comes,
 That, so to do, thy servant now presumes.
 Forgive me if this absolute Petition
 Extends beyond the bound of my *Commission* ;
 For, nothing I intend, what ere I crave,
 Save, what thou art well-pleased I should have,
 Whose will I so prefer before mine own
 In all things (if to me my heart is known)
 That whatsoever may succeed thereon
 Now, or hereafter, *Let thy will be done*.
 My soul thou hast inclined to believe
 His Promises, who said, *Ask, and receive* ;
 Help then my *unbelief* : For, if the grant
 Of this *Petition* shall that fulness want
 Which is desir'd ; no want of *Love* in thee
 Occasions it, but, some defects in me ;

And,

And, that *Obstruction*, which thereon is cast,
Shall by thy Love removed be at last.

*He that in Faith and Love can to his Prayer
Say, for himself, Amen, shall nev'r dispaire;
For, it implies, he is no stranger to
What, man may hope for, and what, GOD, will do.*

Newgate Feb. 1661.

An Advertisement.

WHEN that *private Poem*, was taken from me,
for which I am now a Prisoner, many Printed Books, Writings, and Evidences, being my proper Goods, were therewith unlawfully taken away; among which, there was a *Manuscript in Verse*, Intituled *A Legacy to my Children*, consisting (as I remembember) of about three or four sheets, wherein, that which is prayed for in the preceeding *Meditation*, in relation to my *Posterity*, was much enlarged with *Expostulations* and *Petitions* thereto pertinent. The Restoration thereof, I would acknowledge to be a favour, though it ought not in justice to be detained, because it contains nothing offensive to the Civil or Spiritual Government now Established: And this Advertisement is inserted, in hope, one of those to whose hand it may come, will be a means of restoring unto me both that *Manuscript*, and an *Elogy* which was also therewith taken from me. I would likewise be thankful to the Restorer.

Geo. Wisher.

*At my House in the Savoy, June
1665. was this Advertisement
added.*

D. 2

N I L



N I L U L T R A.

Being a *Soliloquie*, wherein this *Author*,
 expresseth the improbability of an ef-
 fectual proceeding further, in his endea-
 vours (to prevent the *Sins* and *Plegues*
 increasing) by ought offered to consi-
 deration.

Psalm 1. 3.

*When Foundations are destroyed, what can
 the Righteous do ?*

I, At a Non-plus, am this day,
 And, know not what to think or say,
 Or, what part I am next to play :
 That, therefore, which I now expresse,
 Whether the *mark* I misse or *hitt*,
 To publick view I will commit,
 And, leave to GOD, the giving it
 In his owntime, a good successe.

we

2.

We neither love his *Lanes* nor him;
Those men, whose Deeds we did condemn
We (by our imitating them)

Have justified in all their works.
They, who have seemed *self-deniers*,
In their professing *Truths*, are liers,
Like *Lillies* look, but I ratch like *Briars*;

Talk, Christian-like, but, live like *Turks*.

3.

Some, say I dote; and that 'tis so,
I almost am perswaded too,
When I consider what I do:

For little less then doteth he,
Who gives them *bread*, who look for *Chaffe*,
Casts *pearls* to swine, who long for *Drass*,
And strives to save them, who do laugh
When sinking down to hell they be.

4.

Examples we have had of old,
And daily, we falsil'd behold,
What, hath been oft, of late foretold;

Yet, more and more besotted grow.
Nor *Chastisements* nor *Mercy* shew'd,
Though oft withdrawn, and oft renew'd,
Nor what hath for our sins ensude,
Can make us heed the things we know.

5.

What can by me, be said or done,
To stop them, who still headlong run,
To meet the mischieves coming on,

And, which already are in view?
Since, men will neither see nor hear
What is apparant ev'ry where,

D 3

Nor

Nor have Grace, Courage, wit or fear,
Who can prevent what may ensue?

6.

How can *Good sequels* be expected,
Where *Truth* and *Reason* are neglected,
And *gross crime*, not alone suspected,
But, acted also, with shame?
Where, men all prophanations dare,
In all well-doing, *comards* are,
And seem to have nor sense, nor care,
Either of *good*, or *evil Fame*?

7.

When, what relates to *earth* and heav'n,
Seems of it proper use bereaven,
(And what for common use was given,
Made, only, for th' *Abusers* sake)
VWhat *humane wit*, can save them from
A sad inevitable *doom*,
VWho, false to other men become,
And, *pitfalls*, for themselves do make?

8.

VWhen first I did converse with men,
They were exceeding wicked then;
But, now seem worse by five in ten:
For, till of late, I never heard,
That, such abominations were,
So impudently acted, here
VWithin this *clime*, as now they are
By probable *Reports*, aver'd.

9.

If, *Justice* executed were,
If, we were what we would appear,
In thought, in deeds and word, sincere,
Oppressors, and *self-seekers* fewer;

It

It might be hoped, that, those few,
 VVho, to *good principles* are true,
 Might more successfullly pursue
 VVhat would at last, our weal procure.

10.

But, whilst we see, one *crying sin*
 Brings ev'ry day, another in,
 VVence new Corruptious do begin,
 VVhat, can the Righteous hope or do;
 But, meekly wait on GOD, (untill
 Her measure, *wickedness* doth fill)
 Submitting all things to his will,
 And, adding their *Amen*, therero ?

11.

VVhilst we each *mangle humour* claw,
 Turn *Grand Oppressions* into Law,
 Stand nor of GOD, or men in awe,
 And, *Truths*, by *Violence* confute;
 VVe bring but fewel to that fire,
 Or, breath to blow the *flame* still higher;
 VVherein, our hopes will quite expire;
 And, *Prudence* then, is justly mute.

12.

For, when GOD threatens *Desolations*,
 If men turn due *humiliations*,
 To *Trium'hs*, and vain *Recreations*,
 VVhat, can be justly then expected ?
 But, changing *hopes* into *despairs*,
 More *Breaches*, instead of Repairs,
 And, that our formal *thanks* and prayers,
 Should be offensive, and rejected ?

Off,

13.

Oft, under *Trust* is hatched *Treason*,
 V Vise to be thought, is to want *Reason*,
Sincerity is out of season,

Foundations, likewise, are overthrow'd:
 To speak the Truth is now a Crime
 To look for *Justice*, 'tis no time,
 (To be a Knave, the way to 'clime)
 And, *sin*, almost full ripe is grown.

14.

My *witness*, therefore, having born,
 (Among men in the hope forlorn)
 I le, all alone, sit down and mourn

For that, which cannot be prevented.
 My *Lot*, I le meekly take with those,
 VVhom, GOD, shall unto that expose,
 VWhich may befall both Friends and Foes,
 And, therewith will remain contented.

15.

This, now, is all that can be done;
 That, therefore, I resolving on,
 VVill let the *world* awhile alone,
 And, GOD, therein, to work his wil?;
 Ile only take that *Ammunition*,
 VWhich gives no just cause of suspicion,
 And, (without seeking their perdition)
 Let filthy men, be filthy still.

16.

Thus far forth, I have trod the *Maze*,
 VVithout offence to any *cause*,
 Thats justifie, by *Righteous Laws*;
 But, now, no further can proceed:
 For, so, *confusion* here abounds,
 That, *Good* and *Evil*, it confounds,

And,

And whirles us in an endless *Round*;
Which fruitless makes both *war* and *deed*.

17.
For, they who dance upon the brink
Of *Hell* it self (and fondly think
They are secure because they wink ;)

Their open danger cannot see,
But are so vext to hear me tell
Their *Heaven* borders upon *Hell*;
That, for my wishing of them well,
They wish but little good to me.

18.
Perhaps too, as the *Round* now goes,
They who my good intents oppose,
(And are both mine and their own foes)

May seek to take my life away;
If they so do ; when that is done,
I shall beyond their reach be gone,
And he who all deeds looks upon,
Will sudden'y, their spight repay.

19.
Yet, I shall make no such *Request*,
As may not with their *war* consist :
I, neither by the *Sword*, or *Pest*,
Or *Famine*, with aveng'd to be ;
Or by ought else, which might destroy
The life which here they do enjoy,
(Though they that Mercy mis-employ ;)

This, rather shall my *Prayer* be.

20.
Let GOD confound their *pride*, their *bate*,
And all their *Plots* annihilate
Who shall design to practise that
Which may to his dishonor tend.

Let none of those endeavours thrive,
Whereby ungodly men contrive;
How, they another may deprive
Of his just freedom, *For*, or *Friend*.

21.

This *deprecation*, doth not reach
Mens Persons, or that *Love* impeach
Which *Christ* in *Verity* doth teach:
For, to avenge themselves of wrong,
That, giveth liberty to none;
But, to do good for evil done
Required is of every one,
To whom a *Saintship* doth belong.

22.

The *publick welfare* I prefer
Before mine own *particular*;
And this for truth I may aver,
Who ever shall the same deny;
My *Countray*, or my *Sovereign Lord*,
Neither by *actions*, or by *word*,
Or by my *Pen*, or by my *Sword*,
To *self-ends*, injured have I.

23.

I have not broke my Faith to those
Who did a *Trust* in me repose,
Whether they prov'd my *Friends*, or *Foes*,
But, did with Loyalty submit
To do, or suffer under them
Who exercise; the *Power Supream*,
Which is at the dispose of him
Who gives and takes, as he sees fit.

24.

Inever did for Love or Hate
Act, or Design, to innovate

The

The Government of *Church* or *State*,
 But did my duties in my place;
 And when I fear'd, that for our sin
 An *Anarchy* was creeping in,
 Endeavor'd, when it did begin,
 How, to preserve the *Common-Peace*,

25.

When *Civil Powers* were so divided,
 That then, both Fools and Wise men sided
 As *Interest* or *Conscience* guided,
 I fought not to enlarge the rent;
 But, being called *Aid* to bring,
 To, (and by) them, whose counselling
 Had been Authoriz'd by the *King*,
 I, to perform my duty, went.

26.

Retir'd from *Court* and *City* then,
 I liv'd among plain *Countrymen*,
 Employing otherwhile, the *Pen*,
 My private *Musings* to record;
 Which, I had more desire to do,
 Then that which I was call'd unto,
 Till I was importuned so
 That, I at last, put on my *Sword*.

27.

To do my best, forth arm'd I came,
 (My *Conscience* warranting the same)
 And purpos'd nothing worthy blame,
 By unjust *violence*, or *guile*.
 For, in sincerity I thought
 A course we follow'd as we ought,
 Whereby, *means* might to pass be brought,
 Divided *Friends* to reconcile,

But, so *dispos'd* them inrag'd,
 Who were in that Contest inrag'd,
 And, such *ill consequences* prelag'd,
 That, I my Troop did soon disband;
 And, hopeless I should ought assay
 Successful in a *martial way*,
 My *Sword*, and *Arms* quite flung away,
 And took my *Pen* again in hand.

29
 Such new *Adventures* this began,
 That, I appeared to be than
 Betwixt the *Fire* and *Fryeg-gan*:
 For, such proceedings I espy'd;
 That, they who with the best intent
 Pursu'd the way in which they went
 (And ill to neither party meant)
 Found least respect, on either side.

30
 To see what was done *well*, or *ill*,
 I had just cause, against my will,
 To be there, an ey-witness still,
 Where *grand Affairs* transacted were.
 As well the *Person* as the *Name*
 I knew of most men, who by Fame
 Were said to merit praise or blame,
 And, who did best or worst appear.

31
Self-love, base *Avarice*, and *Peide*,
 I saw among themselves divide
 The *publick Rights*, on either side;
 Their, Foes befriending out of season,
 Well-meaning Innocents destroying,
 Their power to favour guilt employing,

And

And, often, to a self-destroying,
Against their Friends committing *Treason*.

32.

I saw both GOD and *Man* offended,
Much finding fault, but little mended,
Good Life and *Piety* pretended;

But, few whose *words* and *works* were one:
They who most quarrell'd with each other,
In evil so agreed together,
That to repose a trust in either,
I found but little cause, or none.

33.

The worse men were, they seem'd the better,
To serve their ends, and much the fitter
To be enriched, and made greater.

Him who did most indulge their sin,
Or, to inflame their lust brought fuel,
Or, were unto their foes most cruel,
They kept about them as a Jewel;
And, such, their chief esteem did win.

34.

Such as had neither *Grace* nor *Wit*,
Such as *Job* judg'd men unfit
Among his *Shepherds* dogs to sit,

Even such as were, the other day,
More worthy of contempt then those
Who liv'd by picking Hips and Sloes
(With such food as on Hedges grows)
Were honor'd; yea, few more then they.

35.

These having scratcht up wealth and power
In Court, and City, Town, and Tower,
Did act as if our fatal hour
Were hither making an advance:

E 3

The

The mean while, men, *here* and abroad,
 At *Hazzard* plaid, in such a mode,
 (At *hide*, at *Even*, and at *Odd*)
 As if all things were rul'd by chance.

36.

Thereby, my hazzards greater were
 Then those which I had cause to fear,
 When *War* most dreadful did appear :
 For, at what I before had done,
One party only, took offence;
 But, I have anger, ever since,
All parties, who have lost the sence
 Of what they seem to carry on.

37.

This, made me dip my *Pen* in Gall,
 Impartially reproving all
 Without regard what might befall
 To me, whilst just things I intended :
 For, alwayes I regarded so
 Their honor, and their profit too;
 With whom my *Muses* had to do,
 That, none have cause to be offended.

38.

It ne'retheless, on me so brought
 Their hate, whose welfare I had sought,
 That of mine own, they left me nought
 Which might my likely want supply :
 No place whereon to rest my head,
 No certainty of daily bread,
 But, in my old Age to be fed
 And cloathed, by pure Charity.

39.

In which strait, GOD provided so
 That, I yet live his work to do,

Well

Well pleased with my portion too ;
 Yea, more then when it larger seem'd ;
 For, what's bereaved was but *Lumber*,
 Which did with many cares becumber,
 And, is not put into the number
 Of things which merit best esteem.

40.

I therefore, whatsoe're beset,
 To high and low did plainly tell;
 (Whether they took it ill or well)

Such things as I thought needful were ;
 And oft expressed with my Pen,
 What might minde me and other men,
 More heed to take, both *how*, and *when*,
 Unto our selves, we traytors are,

41.

And, *Time to come*, when I am dead,
 Shall finde, there will be still much need,
 To tollerate one in my stead,

That may persue what I begun.
 When God so pleaseth, let him come
 To do him service in my room,
 And, let the work he calls me from,
 Thrive better, then it yet hath done.

42.

My time is almost wholly past ;
 And, thinking this may be the last,
 For a *Nil Ultra* here 'tis plac't

As having no more now to say :
 But if my life God longer spare,
 And shall my heart anew prepare,
 His pleasure further to declare,
 I'll take this *Boulder-stone* away.

I sure

I sute it thus, unto these times,
 In that with which most fancies chimes,
 Expressing that in *gingling Rimes*,
 Which I suppose to be in season;
 Else little heed they give thereto;
 Or, if plain Truths observe they do,
 Good meanings are mistaken so,

That, safe it is not to speak Reason.

Things may result sometimes perchance,
 Ev'n from a trifling circumstance,
 Which will be helpful to advance

Th' effecting of a *Grand Design*.

Once e're *Elisba* would begin

To speak, a *Fidler* was call'd in;

Of use, that seem'd then to have been

For his *Work*; so, may this for mine.

Man proposeth, but *G.O.D.* disposeth; and
 his will be done.

God save the King.

Here

Here followeth a brief Defence in answer to private Objections, lately made against some passages in this Authors Writings, heretofore published.

I Am informed by good friends, that among those *Expressions* which I thought pertinent to this *Generation*, I have here and there intermingled that which is distasteful to many who are not therein of my judgement, and that I have thereby lost their good esteem. This I finde experimentally so true, that not a few have neglected me, more to my grief in relation to them, and for their sakes then for mine own, who am not ignorant how I might both have prevented, and may yet repair that loss hereafter. Nevertheless, whatsoever I am, or may be thereby exposed unto, my resolution is, neither to desert those *Principles* whereto I conscientiously adhered, until I am convinced of error; nor to deceive any man by seeming that which I am not: For, I so abhor to comply for meer outward respects with any *Person* or *Society*, in things which I cannot yet believe are agreeable to Gods *revealed will*, and *Christian prudence*; and so far also from recanting what I have conscientiously professed, though to my personal disadvantage, tho I lose all my seeming friends yet left, (who have not *Love* enough to be peaceably minded toward their Brethren, who are conformable, according to their understanding, to the whole will of God revealed in his word) that, as I will neither obstinately resist, or willfully neglect the means of better *information*; so I will not recede from the *Christian Liberty* due to me, and all other men.

F

Many

Many suppose there is no *salvation*, save in that *particular Church* onely, whereof they are *Members*: But, I do believe, (as to me it seems implied in the 87. *Psalms*) that the *City of GOD* extends it self into every part of the world, even into *Egypt, Phylistia, Tyre, Ethiopia*, yea and into *Babylon* also; and, that under every outward *Form* and *Dispensation* whatsoever, *GOD* hath an *elect people*, who are *Citizens of Syon*, though their *particular Churches*, which are, as it were, distinct *Wards* of that *spiritual Corporation*, may have many blemishes, ignorances, errours, and defilements for the present. *In many things, we erre all*: They, who know most, know but in part; yea, the *Apostles* long time after they were chosen by our *Sau our*, judged not aright of his *Kingdom*, nor were free from being ambitious of a *Præluical Preheminency*, but subject to many misapprehensions; and some of them seduced for a while, by an *Anti-christian persecuting spirit*; as many persons in *Congregational* and *National Churches* have ever since been, and zealous without knowledge, in *Practices* and *Principles* tending to that *Babylonish Confusion*, which will universally come to an end ere long, though it hath lately begun to be reinforced. True *Faith* cannot be evidenced without *good works*; which being imperfect in the best men, we have no such certain *mark*, whereby unfeigned *Disciples* may be known, as by their being loving to each other, and charitably affected toward all men; yea, although they are our personal enemies: and this *mark* of distinguishment *Ch* himself hath left us.

Upon these and such like considerations, I have been

been as wary as possibly I could, so to use my *Christian Liberty* at all times, and in all places, that I might not offend a weak believer: And, we have so many among us, who dissent from each other, that it makes the performance of that duty very difficultly inoffensive; and hath put me to more trouble in the flesh, and occasioned more outward inconveniences, by infringing my just *private liberty*, then many of those sufferings put together, which are very grievous to other men. I dare, and do openly profess, (tho some think it needless) my belief and judgement, as oft as I see just occasion is given: yet I do not voluntarily separate my self from any Persons or Congregations, who are not apparently and maliciously wicked in their lives or doctrines; but separate from their damnable errors and sins only, as much as I may: yea, my Conscience makes me afraid, I may justly offend by not complying in some things *Indifferent*, Civil or Divine, which are not repugnant to Gods revealed Word, though not thereby commanded.

Where I know not any weak brother to be then present, whom I may thereby offend, (and when I am thereto inclined for no carnal respects) I can communicate with any professing belief in *Christ Jesus*, either in *Humiliations*, *Thanksgivings*, *Breaking of Bread* in commemoration of our Saviours Passion, or in *Prayer*, where nothing is so idolatrously or superstitiously enjoined or practised, that it derogates from the honour of God, or is contrary to the Canon of his Word, or may in my understanding seem destructive to true *Piety* or *Morality*: For, all other such deficiencies or super-

fluities, as we may suppose to be in the outward worship of God, do but exercise *love, humility, or meekness*; and I look upon them where such be, as I do upon mine own failings or performances. Whatsoever, where I come, which I find to be so done or spoken, that I may absolutely conform thereunto, without offence to God and mine own Conscience, I therein joyn; and when ought is acted or said, whereto I cannot fully assent, I lift up my heart in secret prayer to God, beseeching him to vouchsafe pardon to me, and them for what is ignorantly offended in; and to rectifie both mine and their erroneous understandings, who are then present: which practice of mine, if not worthy to be exemplar, I hope deserves, at least, a charitable censure.

Most of the quarrellings amongst *Christian Professours*, are about matters of less moment then tithing *mint*, and *annise*, and occasion the neglect of weightier matters, as it will appear, if well heeded; as also, that most of our Contests spring from *self-love*, though pretended for *God*; and tend more to satistie the ambition and covetousness of men, then to advance his honour or true piety. For, it is evident, that a *superintendency* over divine Rites, and the Worship of God, is unduly assumed by many, surreptitiously obtained, and magisterially usurped by som who had no lawful call thereunto; yea, & viciously exercised (in my judgment) by all those who endeavour to compel men (otherwise then by loving compellations) either to the omission, or to the use of this or, that *Discipline* or *Forms of Prayer*, against their Consciences. They who think no *Oblivion's* accepted of

of God, but those *set forms*, or extemporary Devotions which they affect, are equally guilty of a superstitious error: For, both the one and the other, may be compleat or defective, warrantably or unwarrantably exhibited, according as they are performed. *Extemporary Prayers* are *set forms* to all who hear them, except to the *speakers* onely; and perhaps also, to some of their knowledges, who speak them, the greatest part of those Prayers are *set forms*, and otherwhiles, in that regard the more acceptable: For, that *form* which the Spirit of God hath at any time dictated, never leaves it to be less effectual then it was at first, if it shall at any other time be offered up on the like occasion by those, who with the same devotion, and a true sense of what is wanting, shall faithfully pray for it in the same words.

Some have affirmed in my hearing, that by declaring my private judgement touching matters controverted, I exposed my self to more sufferings, then were necessarily adventured: yet I do not so believe: For all that I have publicly affirmed in subjects of that nature, whereupon troubles ensued, was by me intended for *Gods Glory* and the common good, (though turned to my personal detriment in appearance) and they have hitherto, brought upon me no mischief, which God hath not converted to my spiritual advantage; whereas, many of those things, which my Censurers practice and profess, have occasioned uncharitable separations, without any benefit to themselves or others; yea disturbed their own and the publick tranquility, to the daily enlarging of breaches, and to the hazzard of an universal

versal irreconcilable *Discord*; if the probable *evil consequents*, be not timely prevented, by an amicable declaring what we are perswaded in our own heart, as we finde just occasion; and by leaving other men to the same Liberty, until they shall be as conscientiously inclined to believe otherwise: and then perhaps many will suspect their own discretion as much as now they do mine; and make it to themselves questionable, who required their former *actings* or *sufferings*, at their hands. Let this be considered by all those *Censurers* of my open heartedness, to whom this shall come; and let my friends be many or few, as God pleaseth; for my trust is in him onely; his honour is my chief aim; from him I cannot conceal what I believe; and from men (as touching things relating to his Service, and the peace of his Church) I will not; nor dissemble my belief: as it should more appear, if it were always, as free for me to publish my thoughts, as I am to write them, at this present.

It is for such respects, questioned by some, *What I am as to Religion?* and of what *Society* I profess my self to be; whereto I answer, that I profess my self a *Catholick Christian*: mistake me not; I do not mean a *Roman Catholick*, which are terms contradictory to themselves, being so united; because, the addition of *Roman* to *Catholick*, destroys that *Denomination*. I am a member of that Church which is *Universal*, and of every particular Church in those places where I reside, so far forth onely (and no further) as it is a member of the Church *Catholick*, professing and practising in purity, the *Faith*, *Doctrine*, and
Disci-

Discipline thereof. I am not of *Paul*, or *Apollo's*, or *Cephas*, or any *Society*, but as they are of *Christ Jesus*; whom I desire to know (as *Paul* said he did) not onely as he was in the flesh, but as he is spiritually to be known also; and to avoid that dividing into *parties*, which from the *Apostles* time until this day, hath tended more to the nourishing of *Discord*, and confirming of *Errors*, then to edification in *Piety* and good life.

I separate from no *Church*, adhering to the foundations of Christianity, not wilfully professing and practising what may be destructive thereto, though there be some defects or corruptions therein. I joyn not in doing or approving what is not approvable in my understanding, yet am as far from a *disaffectionate separation* on my part, as from separating my self from my self, or a limb from my body, though painful and loathsome unto me, by a wound or some disease: For I shall cherish it until it so corrupts and gangreens, that it may destroy my whole body; and then I shall willingly be rid of it. In like manner, waiting in love upon Gods good pleasure toward me and every weak member of *Christs mystical Body*, I will endeavour to preserve my self and them in unity, and leave the anathamizing or judging others to him onely, whose members they are, or pretend to be.

The Title of a *Catholick Christian* aforementioned, I affect not out of singularity, but admit of it by way of distinction onely, to answer their questionings, who ask of what *Religion*, or of what *Church* I am: And I profess an absolute adherence to the *Catholick Church* onely, because that onely is infallible, and the *Sanctuary* of God upon earth, wherein his *Mysteries* are preserved in purity; and wherein I may have assistance of salvation by continuing thetein. I wave the confining my belief or practice to any one *National* or *Congregational Society* of *Christians*, not out of a factious inclination, or petulant disesteem of any: But having a desire to be instrumental in uniting men dissenting in judgement both unto God, and to each other in Love, I conceive that endeavour would be suspected of partiality, and not so effectually prosecuted, if I made my self a party with any one Fraternity more then with another: some of whom strain at a Gnat, and swallow a
Cam.

Cammel; or so presume of their infallibility, that they exclude all as Reprobates, who dissent from them in *Doctrines* or *Discipline*; having also more affection for those who are zealous in the *Opinions* and *Formalities* which they approve, (though held in unrighteousness for carnal ends) then they have for them, who are conscientious professors of the *Truth* in godliness and sincerity, according to their measure of faith and understanding, if they dissent from them but in a Crotchet. For these and such like respects I suffer not my self to be bound up with any *Congregation*, as aforesaid) but so far as the *Christian Liberty*, and the exercise of *Charity* towards all men may be preserved: as also the *Peace* and *Credis* of all *Societies* professing *Jesus Christ*, so far forth as it ought to be; for though he may have somewhat to alleadge against them, (as he had against the seven Churches in *Asia*, to whom he wrote by St. John) they are all in some degree *Nurses* of *Piety* and good manners: And many thousands have had, and have in them, *initiations* into that which is best approvable. Our *National Church* was my first *Nurse*, and I confess with thankfulness, I from thence first drew nourishments, strengthening me towards eternal life; that I had there also, *dry Nurses*, some of which fed me wholesomely, and some to the endangering my being poisoned or starved. But I have but one *Spiritual Mother*, which is the *Catholick Church* aforesaid.

There are other *Objections* whispered; some against my late published *Meditations* upon the *Lords Prayer*; some against my *Tract*, entitled, *The Persecution of the Tongue among Brethren*, a manuscript not yet published; and some others, which I shall by Gods assistance, vindicate as soon as I have leisure, from misapprehensions; and make it evident, there are many who have heretofore complained of severity in those, by whom they were persecuted for their Consciences, who would quickly (had they power answerable to their will) improve it into that *Persecution*, which is the *Mark* of the *BEAST* in the forehead, or in the hand. But, having for just cause, added this here, I will conclude for the present, heartily beseeching GOD, that his *Peace* may be established and continued among his *Saints* for ever.

FINIS.

